



What is it?

- It is Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen's initiative to provide local law enforcement with the ability to quickly alert the business community and the general public about a crime trend or a suspect that may affect them or their business. Businesses with information about those criminal activities can report those activities to local law enforcement.

How does it work?

- DOJ trained law enforcement would send out messages to participating businesses and members of the community using electronic communications that could be selected by region or type of business. For example, in the event of a series of OxyContin thefts from pharmacies in Southeastern Wisconsin, an alert could be sent out by each responding agency to pharmacies in the region who are members.

What is the public benefit?

- By providing information to the business community about criminal activity, law enforcement increases its eyes and ears, more suspects are caught, more runaways are recovered. Businesses have an interest in participating because these alerts can be targeted to criminal activity that affects their particular businesses or their areas. Safer streets and preventing theft enhances business as well as promotes public safety.

Isn't there a concern that sensitive information about ongoing law enforcement investigations will be disclosed to the public?

- No. All entries into the system for distribution to businesses will be by law enforcement trained on the system and familiar with these sensitivities.

Is there the infrastructure for this?

- Communication would be through a private entity contractor to email and blast faxes to participating businesses and members of the public. The Department of Justice already has relationships with contractors who have built essential capabilities by participating in Amber backups and Missing Endangered Alerts. As importantly, this model has been developed and tested. Attorney General Van Hollen's plan is based on a Minnesota program that has been providing similar services for more than 10 years. Though infrastructure would need to be built here, it can be easily adapted based on the Minnesota model.

Who will pay for this?

- Ongoing annual costs are expected to be approximately \$125,000/year. These costs will be paid for by charging private members, who participate voluntarily, an annual fee. In Minnesota, a slightly smaller state by population, annual fees to business are \$12 per year and there are currently over 10,000 members. Attorney General Van Hollen has pledged to fund start-up costs through his discretionary settlement account. Van Hollen is also willing to use the account to cover shortfalls during the initial start-up period while membership grows.

What do we need from the legislature?

- To get the program operational, we will need a law expressly authorizing the ability to charge participating business entities a fee to cover the costs of the program. Only users who voluntarily participate would pay under Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen's plan. There would be no need for general tax revenue. Representative Garey Bies and Senator Jeffrey Plale are co-sponsoring legislation (2007 AB 737) that would authorize Attorney General Van Hollen to implement the Wisconsin Crime Alert Network.